

At a Barre business recognized for its commitment to the Vermont National Guard, Rep. Peter Welch on Monday unveiled new legislation to encourage Vermont businesses to hire veterans.

The Veterans Employment Tax Credit Act, which Welch will introduce in the U.S. House this week, would provide a \$2,400 tax credit to businesses that hire veterans who have been unemployed for at least four weeks. A similar tax credit was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, but lapsed at the close of 2010.

"As Vermont welcomes home the brave men and women of the Vermont Guard who served and sacrificed in Afghanistan last year, we must make sure they have everything they need to succeed in civilian life. Critical to that is ensuring they have good-paying jobs," Welch said. "Vermont business owners know that veterans often make the best employees. But in a tough economy, we should provide an extra incentive for businesses to employ those who have served our country."

Welch announced his new bill at Granite Industries of Vermont, a Barre business that received the Patriot Award from Vermont Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). Owner Jeff Martell and employee Robert McCallum, who served with the Guard in a previous deployment to Iraq, spoke about the importance of hiring Vermont Guardsmen and women. Vermont ESGR Chairman Shawn Bryan and Vermont Secretary of Commerce Lawrence Miller also spoke.

The VET Credit Act would expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to apply to those who have served active duty in the armed services or the National Guard for more than 180 days in the past five years. The WOTC currently provides a \$2,400 tax credit to businesses that hire veterans with a service-connected disability.

In testimony delivered to the Vermont Legislature in January, Adjutant General Michael Dubie said that 30 percent of the those returning from the recent Vermont Guard deployment to Afghanistan were unemployed.

In addition to unveiling his VET Credit Act, Welch said at the press conference that he would

cosponsor the Veterans Act, a bill introduced by Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) to provide a tax credit to businesses that hire veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Welch also used the opportunity to promote three upcoming career fairs the Vermont Guard is holding for veterans in conjunction with the Vermont Department of Labor and ESGR:

- Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2011 – Champlain Valley Fairgrounds, Essex Junction – 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2011 – Castleton State College, Castleton – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Friday, Feb. 25, 2011 – Lebanon College, Lebanon, NH – Time TBD

For more information on the career fairs, contact Lt. Col. Marc Goudreau at (802) 338-3000.